

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
OF THE  
GREAT FALLS PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD/ZONING COMMISSION  
November 12, 2013**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The regular meeting of the Great Falls Planning Advisory Board/Zoning Commission was called to order by Chair Nate Weisenburger at 3:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers of the Civic Center.

**ROLL CALL & ATTENDANCE**

Planning Board Members present:

Mr. Nate Weisenburger, Chair  
Mr. Scot Davis, Vice Chair  
Ms. Dana Ball  
Ms. Cheryl Patton  
Dr. Heidi Pasek  
Ms. Sophia Sparklin  
Mr. Mark Striepe  
Mr. Wyman Taylor

Planning Board Members absent:

Mr. Marty Byrnes

Planning Staff Members present:

Mr. Craig Raymond, CBO, Director P&CD  
Mr. Lee Nellis, FAICP, Deputy Director P&CD  
Mr. Gregg Benson, Planner  
Ms. Galen Amy, Planner II  
Ms. Phyllis Tryon, Sr. Administrative Assistant

Other Staff present:

None

Mr. Raymond affirmed a quorum of the Board was present.

**MINUTES**

Chair Weisenburger asked if there were any comments or corrections to the minutes of the public hearing and regular meeting held on October 22, 2013. Seeing none, the minutes were approved as submitted.

*\*\*Action Minutes of the Planning Advisory Board/Zoning Commission. Please refer to the audio/video recording of this meeting for additional detail.\*\**

## **BOARD ACTIONS NOT REQUIRING PUBLIC HEARING Planning Advisory Board role in City Code Changes**

Mr. Raymond said that it is his intention that the Board and staff take some time in reviewing possible changes to City Code. He said that perhaps there could be work sessions in a less formal environment in the future. He said some possible topics include looking at changes to zoning setbacks, which is based on numerous variance requests. Another topic may be a review of the sign code. He said he will be presenting information to the City Commission in December or January about upcoming compliance deadlines on the sign code and possible changes. Another topic could be the City's Code Enforcement program. The State has sent a letter requesting the City cease and desist from using the International Property Maintenance Code out of Title 15, as they feel it is a violation for the City to adopt it when the State has not. He said that there will be an immediate fiscal change in how the Code Enforcement Officer position is budgeted within the Planning & Community Development Department. He said that Ms. Rohlf, the Code Enforcement Officer, does a fantastic job in getting compliance with few actual citations for blight, rubbish, and junk vehicles, etc. However, the City needs to be on firm legal ground in dealing with these issues.

Mr. Raymond said that the current Code may be able to be reorganized to be more user friendly. Another topic could be a review of the Design Review Board process, as well as reviewing the Home Occupation license process. Currently, neighbors must sign a petition in agreement for a Home Occupation, and if more than one neighbor objects, a license is not granted. He said there is a question on whether that provision is a proper requirement.

Mr. Nellis said that City landscaping requirements may need to be changed. He said a lot of details may need to be discussed overall, and staff needs the involvement of the Planning Advisory Board and the community. He said he has done a number of code rewrites and has been hired for the same in the past, and it is a process that cannot be rushed. He said Board members may be asked to snap pictures of properties they feel are well landscaped and screened, and signs that are attractive or not, as the case may be. Starting at the first of the new year, work sessions can be scheduled in a less formal setting, and a bus tour could be scheduled to view specific issues within the community.

Chair Weisenburger asked if the Design Review Board (DRB) was a peer group to the Planning Advisory Board (PAB). Mr. Raymond said the DRB may need minor administrative tweaks. The decisions of the DRB are final and do not go to City Commission. Chair Weisenburger asked if the PAB would need to meet jointly with the DRB in these work sessions. Mr. Raymond said that was a possibility, as well as meeting with the Board of Adjustment. Chair Weisenburger asked whether subcommittees would be advised, or if the full PAB needs to meet for these work sessions. Mr. Raymond said the greater level of member involvement, the better; a quorum of the PAB is five members, and the work sessions could be advertised as a public meeting.

Chair Weisenburger asked for Board input on whether everyone might want to participate, or if those with specific interest would want to participate. Dr. Pasek asked if the Board is allowed to set up ad hoc work groups that could divide up tasks and bring recommendations back to the Board. Mr. Raymond said he would look into that. Chair Weisenburger said he was willing to participate, but understood if some Board members might feel otherwise. He suggested there could be multiple ad hoc committees covering different topics, and asked for further input from the Board. Mr. Raymond said he would look into the details of creating ad hoc committees.

Ms. Sparklin said she liked the idea of a tour and then a discussion about the possible changes, continuing with a focused ad hoc approach. Chair Weisenburger inquired if there were any “hot topics.” Mr. Raymond said all the issues were important, and staff wants to keep an open mind to any other items that the Planning Advisory Board may want to bring up.

Mr. Taylor asked if staff was going to work on these items one at a time, and Mr. Raymond said there could be multiple items being worked on at the same time. Mr. Taylor said it might be helpful if there were items that could be addressed at regular meetings. Mr. Nellis said the only item on a time constraint was the sign code, and he said that can be a contentious issue but needs to be addressed soon. He said he would like to start the process, however, with something more straightforward and then sooner or later, the sign code will have to be addressed. Mr. Raymond said it took three years to develop the current sign code. The first critical deadline was December 31, 2012, which dictates that any time a sign permit is issued for a repair, the entire sign must be brought into compliance with current code. All signs in the City limits must be brought into compliance with current code by December 31, 2015. The current sign code was passed by the City Commission in 2003. Mr. Raymond said staff needs to build a data base of noncompliant signs and send out notices about the compliance deadlines. Businesses had three years from the date of effect of the current sign code to request having a sign grandfathered in, but few businesses took advantage of that. He said the question is how to improve 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue South aesthetically, for instance, while encouraging businesses at the same time.

Mr. Taylor asked if new signs must be immediately compliant, and Mr. Raymond said they do. Mr. Davis asked about engineering requirements for modifying signs. Mr. Raymond said making the cabinet itself smaller does not require engineering, but cutting a pole would.

Chair Weisenburger asked for any additional discussion. Mr. Raymond will let the Board know about how ad hoc committees may be set up at the next PAB meeting, and the matter will be continued in the new year.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### Next Meeting Agenda – November 26, 2013

- None

### Upcoming Planning Board Projects

- None

### Project Status:

- Talus Apartments
  1. City Commission Agenda item - Nov. 19
  2. City Commission Public Hearing on Annexation – Jan. 7, 2014

Ms. Amy said that the developer and land owner are working out details on the Talus Apartments, and the Nov. 19 public hearing will be vacated. The property closes on December 15, 2013.

### Petitions and Applications Received:

- None

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Chair Weisenburger adjourned the meeting at 3:35 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN

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SECRETARY